

AGENDA ITEM: CLSA State Reference Centers Program**BACKGROUND:**

This CLSA program has never been funded by the state. The program and services to be provided are described in Education Code Sections 18760-18764, and the similar (though not identical) LoC services are described in Education Code Section 18853(a).

The CLSA State Reference Centers Program provides for the establishment of two or more statewide reference centers which provide statewide service. It also specifies that one or more of the state reference centers be designated as a "...repository for collections specially relevant to economically disadvantaged and non English-speaking persons." The State Reference Centers Program has not been funded under CLSA.

The LoC program element calls for "access to specialized information expertise and resources statewide to answer information requests generated by its primary clientele that are beyond the capacity or capability of a member institution or public library jurisdiction and its regional library network." It also indicates that "Provision shall be made for information formats specially relevant to culturally diverse populations and persons with disabilities." This service element has not yet been funded by the state under LoC.

A multi-year planning process developed a four-pronged design for the CLSA State Reference Centers Program which encompasses strengthening information services at the local library level (general reference; information services for ethnic populations) and statewide backup for local and System reference services (referral to the most comprehensive/specialized libraries statewide; creation of a "virtual" Ethnic Resource Center that contains online information in multiple formats and languages). In May, 1989 the California Library Services Board discussed and approved this outline for a Statewide Reference Centers Program. This model resulted from extensive discussions with the library community.

In May 1992, the CLSB took further action to determine the approach for the Ethnic Resources portion of the program. At that time the CLSB approved this component to move in the direction of being a Virtual Center. At that same meeting, the CLSB adopted a composite design for the CLSA State Reference Centers Program.

As simultaneous planning occurred for the multitype library network which would expand CLSA's focus from public libraries to all types of libraries under The Library of California, the library community endorsed and adopted the Board's design for the State Reference Centers as the route for the new library network (Exhibit A). The Library of California Act became law on January 1, 1999. The areas authorized for its initial funding relate to Phase I start-up activities, which do not include funding for any state reference services functions.

Budget requests to implement the entire CLSA State Reference Centers Program were submitted in 1992, 1996, 1997, and 1998, but the program was not funded. When the Library of California Act became law on January 1, 1999 the funding authorized for its initial

implementation did not include the state reference services programs. As the Library of California program expands, however, funding for the LoC state reference services programs can be requested in the years ahead.

CURRENT STATUS: In accordance with Board direction, a 2000/01 budget request that was submitted to implement Phase II of the Library of California included funding support for an LoC state reference services program as expanded to encompass all types of libraries. It did not, however, appear in the Governor's January 2000 proposed budget nor in his May revise of that budget.

Work continues, using LSTA funds, on the refinement and field testing of individual CLSA State Reference Centers Program components as follows.

FIRST SOURCE:

While an LSTA grant for 1999/2000 continues to support the First Source program of Los Angeles Public Library, through which access to 200-plus online databases is provided to all CLSA System Reference Centers, there is no guarantee that this federal support will continue. Since 53% of all System reference transactions now rely upon First Source in some manner, and since back-up to the Systems (and to the emerging Regional Library Networks) is part of the CLSA/LoC program, the Board requested that an evaluative report on the use and value of First Source be presented. It is noted that this form of back-up support is one of the four components of the CLSA State Reference Centers Program as well as a potential element of the LoC state reference services function. Thus, it could be funded now as a licensed database project. At the April 2000 Board meeting, members reviewed the report evaluating First Source and discussed alternative funding options for it.

The State Librarian is now considering an LSTA grant application to support the First Source program in 2000/01, which could allow 6 months for a more detailed evaluation and (if necessary) for CLSA Systems to budget for the service or make alternative plans for service provision. Should this LSTA request be approved by the State Librarian, funding will continue from federal sources through September 2001. The Board will be considering a Budget Change Proposal for 2001/02, under a separate agenda item, that could implement the LoC state reference services program under the Library of California Act.

VIRTUAL ETHNIC RESOURCE CENTER (VERC):

The VERC has been mounted recently on a website with three information modules: "Healthy Mom, Healthy Baby" (English and Spanish), "Understanding the Law" (English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean), and "African-American Photographs" (English). Information is available online at www.verc.org and a user evaluation form has recently been included as a part of each hit. Publicity forms are being mailed to libraries and community centers statewide, both for internal use and for distribution to clients. This is a demonstration project, and unless funding is identified for the VERC from federal, state, or private sources, the program will cease to be funded as of September 30, 2000. It is noted, however, that a private source will maintain the website until December 31, 2000.

CONSUMER HEALTH INFORMATION SERVICE PROGRAM:

A pilot project involving cooperative endeavors to provide consumer health information

to Californians, using the resources of major medical research libraries and public libraries, is nearing conclusion in Region V. Loma Linda University identified the optimum consumer health resources for public libraries (the resultant “Core Consumer Health Bibliography for Public Libraries” can be found on the web at www.llu.edu/llu/library/corelist.htm). The University then provided training for Riverside Public Library staff (the training modules are available on the website of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine-Pacific Southwest Region, at www.nlm.nih.gov/psr/chi/rx4access.html), and the training is now being offered to other public library staff in Region V. This program is scheduled to continue on a limited geographic basis after federal funding ceases on September 30, 2000. It has demonstrated a viable program at this point and is a candidate for an expanded, ongoing support through a combination of local and state funding under the LoC state reference services program.

Recommendation:

As the CLSA Statewide Reference Centers Program was finalized in 1992, and it has been unfunded through state funds to date, it seems appropriate to take time for another look at the totality of the backup reference services program and determine if the 1992 model meets today’s library needs. As regions begin to develop models for regional reference service support, there is the opportunity to build a statewide model that provides the type of support that is most useful and beneficial. It is now time to begin the development of the major portion of this program, and determine what, if any, state resources are needed to support it. In addition, as the Statewide and Regional Resource Libraries programs develop, there may be more crossover between the roles of the libraries of those programs in providing reference support and this program. Staff recommends that during the coming year, a complete review of the LoC reference services programs be made a high priority for staff work, and that a report on that review be brought to the Board in June 2001 for possible beginning implementation in fiscal 2001/2002 and/or potential funding through a 2002/03 budget request.

RELATED ISSUES TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD IN THE FUTURE:

1. Consider report on the review of the 1992 CLSA State Reference Centers model and possible alternative implementations of state reference services under The Library of California Act.
2. Review results of the studies and projects now underway, including the pilot project involving System Reference Centers and rural library access to First Source services, the Virtual Ethnic Resource Center, and the Consumer Health Information Service program in Riverside.

Relevant Committee: Access Services
Staff Liaison: Barbara Will

